

Reviews

CARMARTHENSHIRE & BEYOND: STUDIES IN HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN MEMORY OF TERRY JAMES. Edited by Heather James and Patricia Moore. 180 × 254 mm. xxii + 334 pp. 231 illustrations. Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society, 2009. ISBN 978 0 906972 05 2. Price £19.95.

The Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society is unmatched, at least in Wales, when it comes to producing memorial volumes for its eminent departed. Twenty years ago, Heather James edited *Sir Gâr. Studies in Carmarthenshire History* (1991), a volume of essays in memory of two Carmarthenshire stalwarts, W. H. Morris and M. C. S. Evans. Now comes a volume dedicated to her late husband, Terry James, who, working first for the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and then the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, accomplished so much in the years before his premature death in 2007.

Twenty-eight papers are grouped into subject areas in which Terry James was particularly involved. Two deal with aerial photography, three with painting and prints, three with upland settlement, two with place-names, all subjects in which he had a deep interest. Carmarthen itself figures prominently with eight contributions, for Terry was Carmarthen born and bred, and apart from a four-year break in Oxford working at the Oxford University Press, he spent all his life there. Many other papers examine aspects of Carmarthenshire's, or in a few instances Cardiganshire's history, and most have been prepared by people based in south-west Wales, though a few are by friends of Terry's from the wider world, notably Scotland and Devon. Collectively they form a heterogeneous set, ranging from notes of no more than four or five pages, to substantive articles in excess of twenty.

The first papers deal with paper-making and printing which was Terry James' first profession before he turned to archaeology, and they include a study of paper-making in west Wales by Terry Wells, another by Eiluned Rees on printing and ancillary trades in Carmarthen in the century after 1720, and what represents the most broad-ranging contribution in the volume, by Gwyn Walters, which looks at the work of Erasmus and the printers who worked for him in western Europe in the early sixteenth century. Two papers focus on terrestrial photography, with Chris Delaney's commentary on the work of an early twentieth-century Carmarthen photographer, J. F. Lloyd, and Tom Lloyds's more anecdotal discourse on the photographic collection of buildings by the former Carmarthen museum curator, J. F. Jones, which Terry salvaged.

Jill and Conrad Davies examine early printed images of the Tywi Valley and the travellers who incorporated them into their published itineraries, generally during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (though special attention is paid to the more recent work of John Piper, in what is almost an epilogue on an English artist who clearly loved the Tywi valley). Dylan Rees attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Christopher Williams, a Carmarthenshire artist who was classed as 'deplorably bad' less than twenty years after his death in 1934.

Stephen Briggs uses a nineteenth-century survey by Sir John Gardner Wilkinson as a peg for questioning whether gold was mined at Dolaucothi in the Roman era, Beverley Smith's examination of the advowson of Abernant Church leads on to its likely identification as a mother church in the early medieval era, Toby Driver assesses the present and future role of aerial archaeology in Carmarthenshire, Ken Murphy considers a short-lived deer park at Cyffig at the end of the sixteenth century, and the deer-park theme is addressed too by Simon Taylor in a paper on earthworks known as The Trenches at Falkland in Fife. Longer is Seamus Cunnane's discussion of the topography of medieval Cardigan; it is speculative, informative and entertaining, with a lengthy consideration of the nature and site of the lost church of Holy Trinity.

Wyn Evans, the bishop of St Davids, writes about the recovery and refurbishment of the cloisters at his cathedral, about the history of this part of the cathedral precinct from the fourteenth century onwards, of its decay after the Reformation, and of how plans first formulated in 1994 brought the cloisters back into commission in 2007. And an ecclesiastical theme is maintained firstly by Neil Ludlow in his re-examination of the bishop's palace at Abergwili, in the light of work done there in 2005, a site that had previously been studied by Terry James, and by Heather James who discusses Pentowyn, a grange of Carmarthen Priory lying on the opposite side of the Taf Estuary from Laugharne. She presents a strong case for it being an early estate and one that perhaps had extensive open-field arable even before the Norman Conquest.

Muriel Bowen-Evans and Anthony Ward offer a biography of an abandoned upland farm on the Black Mountain with thoughtful comments on the development and decline of settlement in its vicinity. A similar biography of a possibly late sixteenth-century farm in the Doethïe valley of Cardiganshire, contributed by Richard Suggett is followed by one on the place-names of the same area by Iwan Wmffre, with a strong emphasis on the origins and development of the sheepwalks there, a study that has implications much wider than this small part of Cardiganshire.

Heather James prefaces the volume with an affectionate introduction of Terry's life and work, and the book is completed by a paper that Terry himself had compiled before his death on the Pothouse, an eighteenth-century building on the waterfront at Carmarthen, complemented by a further study of the building by Edna Dale-Jones. Together these offer what must be one of the most thorough histories of a single industrial building not only within Carmarthen, but in the country as a whole.

Throughout the writers pay tribute to Terry James' learning and his contributions to Carmarthenshire's history, and the volume constitutes a fitting tribute to him. Only the most dedicated reader is likely to read through it from cover to cover, but such is the variety of themes and subjects that there is something here for everyone to enjoy. Yet it is more than that for the volume testifies to the enthusiasm and research of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society, its members and its friends. Other Welsh county societies might care to take note.

Welshpool

BOB SILVESTER

ROMAN FRONTIERS IN WALES AND THE MARCHES. Edited by Barry C. Burnham and Jeffrey L. Davies. 245 × 284 mm. 380 pp. 256 illustrations. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2010. ISBN 978 1 871184 39 6. Price £35.00.

The production of the third edition of *The Roman Frontier in Wales* has been eagerly anticipated, nor are we disappointed. From the front cover to the back, this is a visual delight, with copious use of colour, and a mine of information. The book is well designed so that plans and aerial photographs or geophysical surveys of the same site sit on the same opening aiding understanding of the descriptions and discussions. All the maps illustrate the topography, though in two different styles. The text is written by the experts in their subjects and skilfully brought to press by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

How does this edition differ from its predecessors? Firstly, in the title. This is not *The Roman Frontier in Wales*³ but *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches*. This sensible approach acknowledges the inclusion of the legionary fortress at Chester and other relevant sites. Secondly, in the order of the sections and the amount of discussion. It would be tedious to provide details of every such change; suffice to note that the chapter on the history of the frontier has grown from 10 to 30 pages, a reflection

of our increased knowledge. Thirdly, in the range of contents. There are now chapters on roads and maritime communications, civil settlements, and supply and the environment, and new sections on the history of excavation, and on research and problems of chronology in relation to inscriptions, coins and pottery as well as the sites themselves. There is a discussion of the relationship between the military and civilian communities. The result is to produce a more rounded picture of the Roman army in Wales. However, the Roman camps of Wales are not included in the book, apart from featuring on maps and some plans, having recently seen detailed attention from Jeff Davies and Rebecca Jones.

The wide-ranging nature of the contents of the *Roman Frontiers* raises this edition to a new level. This is emphasised by the section on the problems of chronology, for the result is that not only is the raw data presented, but the problems of interpreting it are also considered. Further, the close integration of text and illustrations results in the immediate clarification of the written word. A significant addition comes through geophysical surveys. These have revolutionised our understanding of civilian settlements in particular and are used to good effect here. The combination of aerial survey and geophysical survey is well illustrated by the plans of the fort, camps and civil settlement at Llanfor.

Are there any omissions? There are two significant gaps. One is the lack of discussion of the late forts in Wales. Wales not only has Cardiff, but Hen Waliau in Caernarfon as well as Caer Gybi and the tower on Holyhead Mountain on Anglesey. There are descriptions of all, but no plan of Hen Waliau, which does not even appear in the index. More significantly, these military installations are not considered as a group. In the discussion section it is suggested that Caer Gybi and the tower on Holyhead Mountain, which has produced several coins later than 378, may have been built at the time of the northern campaign of Magnus Maximus in 383, but a more convincing occasion might be a decade earlier during the building campaigns of the Emperor Valentinian I (364–75) when towers were erected on both the northern and eastern frontiers of the empire. Whatever their date, their construction emphasises the continuing care of the Roman authorities for the safety of its citizens on the fringes of the empire.

The second omission is reference to W. S. Hanson's suggestion for the continuing occupation of forts in central Wales from the second century onwards, the requirement to control mining. Instead, it is suggested that the role of the soldiers in these forts was 'internal policing'. There is a significant difference for the latter explanation implies that the Welsh tribes remained restless during the Roman period while the former not only offers a different explanation for the continuing presence of the army in the area but moves the focus to imperial considerations.

Criticisms are few. It is not clear why there is a separate map of the tribes of Wales (1.10) when the same information is placed on a map two pages earlier (1.8), on which the tribal names are perhaps more sensibly placed in relationship to the landscape. And it is unfortunate that the map of the camps (1.8) is not placed opposite that of the forts (1.9) for then the reason for the clustering of the camps becomes clearer: one cluster lies around Wroxeter while the other is focused on the forts in the Buckton area. These are clearly nodal points and an appreciation of their significance helps us to understand the conquest and occupation of Wales better. The plans of sites are not reproduced at standard scales, nor is there a single illustration depicting all forts, unlike the previous edition. The illustrations of individual buildings (3.6–3.12) are selective. There are, for example, only four commanding officers' houses reproduced in comparison to the six in the last edition and, as a result, not all types are included. The index is disappointing. Emperors such as Constantine and Valentinian, mentioned several times in the text, are not included, but there is space for one entry each for Dover and *pes Drusiana*, for example. The three entries for Ireland are actually for the Irish.

This is a major contribution to Roman frontiers studies. Its contributors, illustrators, photographers, designers and publishers all deserve our congratulations and thanks. *Roman Frontiers in Wales* and the

Marches together with Davies and Jones' *Roman Camps in Wales and the Marches* deserve to be the springboards for a new era of research in the Principality.

Edinburgh

DAVID J. BREEZE

VIKINGS OF THE IRISH SEA. By David Griffiths. 172 × 248 mm. 191 pp. 100 illustrations. The History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2010. ISBN 978 0 7524 36465 3. Price £17.99.

This affordable book will be a welcome addition to readers' bookshelves. It follows on from a long tradition of looking at available archaeological and historical evidence across both land and sea, regardless of territorial boundaries. Bowen published his *Saints, Seaways and Settlements* in 1969, setting his horizons not just on Wales, but extending his perspective to embrace Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, the South-West peninsula and Brittany, and at times Iceland and the Spanish See of Britoña. In a number of publications, he saw the Irish Sea as a dynamic zone of contact in the prehistoric and early medieval periods. Close on its heels followed the Cambrian Archaeological Association conference proceedings, *The Irish Sea Province in Archaeology and History*, edited by Donald Moore (1970). More recently, Barry Cunliffe has extended this horizon in time, providing a deep-time perspective on the sea as a cultural connector, while Sir David Wilson's *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus University Press, 2008) placed the island's archaeology within its wider Irish Sea context. Griffiths' book takes the opportunity to reinforce this approach when considering the Vikings. At the same time, it provides a valuable amplification of research started for his PhD, and focused on the recently published site at Meols on the Wirral peninsula.

The author must be congratulated in bringing together in an accessible format information from a wide range of disparate archaeological and historical sources. To quote from the Introduction, 'The book does not attempt to iron out differences in a search for false conformity around the Irish Sea . . . but to redress the balance by placing the neighbouring areas around this small maritime zone within the context of each other'. The chapters that follow address all the key themes: raids and early settlement in Ireland, 'Exporting violence and seeking landfall c.850–c.1050', 'Land-take and landscape', 'Burial: changing rites, new places', 'Trade, silver and market places', 'Towns and urbanisation', 'Assimilation and cultural change'. The conclusions are well balanced, if at times cautious—suggesting, for example, in the regional survey of burials (chapter 5), that the pair of iron stirrups from St Mary Hill in the Vale of Glamorgan may be a stray find (the probability of a *pair* being lost in this way is not discussed). Unsurprisingly, archaeology has still to resolve many issues. Griffiths points to the apparent failure of Northumbrian stycas dating to the ninth century to cross the Irish Sea to Ireland and the Isle of Man, though they occur in hoards around the Irish Sea coasts of north-west England and south-west Scotland. Copper-alloy, ninth-century, styca coins have now appeared at Llanbedgoch, and it remains unclear how they operated as coinage in north-west Wales (presumably less of a problem for earlier ninth-century debased silver examples within bullion economies). Griffiths resurrects the suggestion first made by the late George Boon that Blackburn's 'Chester Group' of imitations found in the Pant-yr-eglwys hoard may be a native response to the need for coin (G. Boon 1986, *Welsh Hoards*, 14), suggesting Rhuddlan.

In the final chapter, the author asks the question 'was there an Irish Sea province in the Viking period'? This reviewer agrees with his response (yes and no), which is dependent on the criteria used. Research is reassessing the degree of cultural conformity, and recognising complex local and regional variations beneath the veneer of the culture province concept. Griffiths recognises the rapid pace of change within the scientific archaeology of human remains. This is borne out by recent stable isotope analysis of the

Llanbedgoch burials and an ongoing reassessment of their backgrounds and contexts, which could not be included within this book. Such studies certainly promise much in the future. He also usefully questions how we tend towards traditional ‘culture historical’ notions of identity using national terms (‘Scandinavian’, ‘Irish’, ‘Welsh’, ‘English’, ‘native’, ‘foreigner’) and suggests that we develop new definitions that embrace concepts of fluidity, occupational identities, hybridity and diaspora. His note at the end that ‘this book will inevitably seem dated, probably very soon, as new discoveries come to light’ should not detract from its value as a synthesis of the state of knowledge today. A good read, and good value.

Cardiff

MARK REDKNAP

THE MEDIEVAL MARCH OF WALES. THE CREATION AND PERCEPTION OF A FRONTIER, 1066–1283. By Max Lieberman. 160 × 235 mm. xv + 292 pp. 31 illustrations. 8 tables. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010. 978 0 521 76978 5. Price £55.00.

This thought-provoking book addresses what Dr Lieberman describes as ‘a puzzle’: the process by which the ‘first’ March of Wales which ‘seems to have been the Welsh border of the English county of Shropshire,’ expanded so that by c. 1300 ‘all ‘Marcher lordships’, even those in south Wales, were normally included within the medieval March of Wales, the region known to contemporaries as *Marchia Wallie*’ (Preface, xi).

In order to investigate this shift in the nature and designation of the March, Lieberman focuses on the borderland between Shropshire and Powys. Starting from the notion that in 1065 the Anglo-Welsh border was ‘generally thought of as a line’, he notes that the arrival of Roger of Montgomery changed that, with the Anglo-Normans of Shropshire raiding, and extending castles, deep into Wales. He picks out the reign of Henry I as a period of ‘pivotal importance’ in the development of a frontier region, when the king’s decision to allow the earldom of Shrewsbury to lapse after the crisis of 1102 left the Anglo-Norman frontier in the hands of a group of lords controlling compact border territories containing strong castles with a clear defensive purpose. Raiding by Welsh forces was common in the middle decades of the twelfth century, which also saw significant population movements, as Welsh settlers moved eastwards into the Anglo-Norman borderland, creating enduring Welsh enclaves.

In Lieberman’s view it was the failure of Henry II’s 1165 campaign into Wales from Oswestry that cemented the perception that a border zone would be a long-term feature of Anglo-Welsh relations. This gave rise to the regular use of the term *Marchia Wallie* in the Pipe Rolls, and subsequently in other sources, initially to describe the Shropshire-Powys border region, and later to denote the rest of the Anglo-Welsh borderland. He traces the ‘solidification’ of the Shropshire-Powys March, and the development of a Marcher society. The tensions and conflicts of the thirteenth century ensured that the Shropshire-Powys borderland remained a military frontier, but the complexity and hybrid quality of the border region deepened with increasing cross-border marriages and the introduction into ethnically and culturally Welsh areas of the March of ‘English-style methods of seigneurial governance’—which often coexisted with Welsh law and custom. Most importantly, the thirteenth century saw the development of the idea amongst the Anglo-Norman lords of the March that their lordships lay ‘beyond the reach of the English state’. Thus, for Lieberman, ‘[t]he early emphasis of the concept [of the March of Wales] was on lordships on the frontier between England and Wales rather than on conquest territories in Wales itself. However, as further traits came to be considered typical of the ‘March’, the similarities between the lordships on the Anglo-Welsh borders and those in south Wales made it possible for both these categories, eventually, to be considered part of the same whole’ (page 259).

The development of these arguments is sometimes debatable. Lieberman's emphasis on the linear nature of the Anglo-Welsh border of 1065 perhaps neglects the impact of the career of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn—a point implicitly acknowledged on pages 106–7. Lieberman appears in two minds about how to integrate the *Marcha de Wales/Walis* of Domesday Book, located in 'the valleys of the river Lugg and of the Hindwell brook' into his view of the development of the March (pages 5–11). The assumption that the March 'between Shropshire and Powys' continued into the later thirteenth century (pages 257–58) should perhaps be set against the assertions from 1278 onwards of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys and his successor Owain de la Pole that they were barons of the March.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this book lies in its depiction of the development of one sector of the March—marked by a geo-political environment not precisely paralleled elsewhere. As a study of a region moulded by quite distinct influences—historical, geographical and cultural—it is of great value. But as a mine of factual information it contains errors of detail, relating particularly to discussions of the Welsh element in, and to the side of, the March. A few examples must suffice. Events ascribed to an otherwise unknown Anglo-Welsh conflict of 1221 (page 32) actually relate to the war of 1223. The ruler who intended to build a castle near Welshpool in 1111 was not Madog ap Rhirid (page 39, n.75) but Cadwgan ap Bleddyn. Gwenllian, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd, did not 'marry Einion Clud of Elfael in 1188' (page 115); she was the wife of the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth. The Welsh capture of the castle of Carreghofa ascribed to 1167 (page 123) took place in 1163, and the Owain ap Gruffudd involved in the capture may well have been Owain Gwynedd rather than Owain Cyfeiliog (cf. page 121, n.104). Llywelyn Fawr seized the lands of Gwenwynwyn, not Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, in 1208 (page 127). The numerous maps are welcome, but the course of the Severn's upper reaches is consistently mangled; Map 7 omits many examples of dual Welsh and English place-names; Map 8, depicting Welsh population in the March, is rendered useless by its limited sources of data; Map 17 omits Powis from the later castles of the borderland.

At another level Lieberman's argument sometimes contains contentious assumptions. It is difficult to see the basis for the statement (page 136) that 'the Powys frontier was, on the whole, not the most violent part of the Welsh borders'. The paucity of the evidence hardly permits such generalisation, as implicitly acknowledged on page 139 where the documentation is characterised as 'probably misrepresenting the actual incidence of local border warfare'. Again Lieberman's suggestion that the Anglo-Norman lords of the borderland were given an unprecedented role in frontier affairs from the reign of John ignores both the involvement of, say, the Lestranges as early as the mid-twelfth century and the fact that the evidence of such involvement inevitably increases dramatically with the introduction of chancery enrolments in John's reign and so distorts our perception of developments.

In a work of this density criticism of specific points is inevitable and a prelude to further discussion. Dr Lieberman has written a rewarding book. It is the best detailed survey of a sector of the March in its formative period to have appeared for many years. It is also a reminder of how much work remains to be done.

Bangor

DAVID STEPHENSON

THE MEDIEVAL CASTLES OF WALES. By John R. Kenyon. 156 × 233 mm. x + 166 pp. 30 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2010. ISBN 978 0 7083 2180 5. Price £12.99.

This attractive paperback promises to provide 'an authoritative short guide for the visitor to the history and architecture of the majority of the accessible medieval castles of Wales'. It is certainly authoritative, since few scholars can rival John Kenyon's knowledge of castle building and castle literature in Wales

and more widely throughout Britain. It is regrettably short, with only ten introductory pages permitted for an examination of five centuries of castle building. The book tackles the history in three ways: briefly in the introduction, more appositely in the castle descriptions and, unpredictably, in the box features—an aspect adopted from Cadw guidebooks. These features should ‘elaborate more fully on particular aspects, for instance gatehouses, or key personalities, such as Llywelyn Fawr’. This claim will be examined later in the review. The architecture is self-evident because it is castle form and function which predominate over architectural style and decoration. Certainly the fourteen figures giving plans of twenty-two different castles (twenty-one in Cadw guardianship) enable the reader to understand the form and development of the castles; most plans, along with the more detailed site descriptions, provide a good indication of castle function. The only exception is the text figure giving thumbnail-sized plans of nine Welsh-built castles, lacking feature names or period-sequenced shading. The sixteen colour illustrations are excellent in providing an overall impression of a site, whether of earthwork or masonry, but only two views (Beaumaris chapel and Criccieth gatehouse) emphasise specific architectural details. Again Cadw features strongly in the supply of illustrations. One may regard this as inevitable when half of the 87 castles chosen for discussion are in Cadw guardianship, itself a testimony to the assiduity with which Cadw has garnered and cherished the built heritage, both Welsh and English.

Therefore, with a wealth of plans, illustrations and concise informative descriptions of the state-owned sites, nearly all of them with recent guidebooks, the author’s task here is to give a foretaste of the riches which await the enquiring visitor, who may purchase a fuller guide and read the display panels or hitch up to the audio walk. What about the less appealing other half, now in the ownership of trusts, local authorities and private individuals?

A few are well-maintained and well-displayed. Here the National Trust or National Park castles of Chirk, Powys and Carew have good descriptions and two have colour illustrations though none has a plan. The visitor can wander in comfort, official guidebook in hand. Lower down the scale of information and the intelligibility of the site come twenty sites in the care of local authorities. These vary from the informative Cardiff, the exhilarating Dinas Brân, the municipal garden of Aberystwyth down to the overgrown Builth and the perilous Oystermouth. Five of these castles have a guidebook, but one would need to consult Kenyon’s major *Bibliography* to obtain details. Some have information panels, though often vandalised. For all these sites, and a further five in the care of trusts or charities, access is easy but on-site information may be patchy, so Kenyon’s book does provide a concise indication of what the visitor might expect. The remaining sixteen sites are mainly earthwork castles; at three of them their form is clearly shown by excellent colour air photographs. Puzzlingly the illustrations are arranged in order of their appearance in the regional gazetteer rather than chronologically. This guide gives a hint of whether it is worth seeking out what survives of Caerleon, Kenfig or Pennard. Certainly Kenyon seems to relish the energetic climbs up to Tinboeth, Twmbarlwm and Castell Bwlchyddinas. He also stresses that Caldicot needs more work on its interpretation—a pity he didn’t give a plan to assist his description. Yet if Caldicot needs fuller investigation, so do the equally complicated sites of Ruthin and Morgraig, but the author did not select them for his gazetteer.

As mentioned previously the ‘box features’ are unpredictable; they pop up like mushrooms, sometimes in an appropriate context, but more usually without any relevance (such as the revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn within the description of Dolforwyn, or concentric castles as late as page 124 within an account of Loughor). There is no list of these little boxes, so it is difficult to pursue them methodically if one wishes to consult the nine architectural items or the four historical ones. This highlights the problem of what is this work’s intended purpose: is it just to whet the armchair visitor’s appetite for castles? In terms of a practical companion the four regional guides produced by Cadw (1992–95) are a much better introduction, each guidebook providing a general map, clear instructions on access, more individual

plans and a fuller bibliography. What they lack is Kenyon's unsympathetic postscript on the Victorian pastiche-castles and his poignant dedication to a lost friend.

Cambridge

LAWRENCE BUTLER

THE IMPACT OF THE EDWARDIAN CASTLES IN WALES. Edited by Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon. 220 × 287 mm. xi + 211 pp. 141 illustrations. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2010. ISBN 978 1 84217 380 0. Price £35.00.

When the Cambrians visited Caernarvon castle in 1937, they were addressed by 'young Mr Taylor', the recently appointed Assistant Inspector of the Office of Works. Arnold Taylor's subsequent career, here summarized by John Kenyon, will always be associated with the study, conservation and protection of the Edwardian castles of north Wales. Combining primary documentary research, analysis of surviving fabric and first-hand knowledge of European castles, it was an inspiration to many who followed him. This book, the fruit of a conference held in Bangor in September 2007, with the support of Cadw and the Castle Studies Group, to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the death of Edward I, brings together the work of over twenty scholars in a survey of the Edwardian castles and their impact on Wales.

Unusually for such a volume, it is difficult to find an article not up to the exacting standard of the whole, and special mention should be made of the extremely high standard of the illustrations (many in colour) which we have come to associate with Cadw's publications section. The book opens with a masterly overview of Edward I and Wales by Michael Prestwich, followed by three papers on the Princes of Gwynedd and their castles (David Stephenson, David Longley and Lawrence Butler). Despite their individuality, the castles of the Princes show the influence of English magnate castles, in line with the views of both Llywelyns on their status. Dolbadarn's round tower resembles Hubert de Burgh's Skenfrith and, as Butler notes, Henry III's Montgomery, begun in 1223, influenced the characteristic apsidal towers and the layout of Dinas Brân and Criccieth. David Browne considers the castles of Edward I's 1277 campaign at Builth and Aberystwyth, studied by the late Jack Spurgeon.

Central to Taylor's work was the career of the Master of the King's Works in Wales, James of St George. Nicola Coldstream now reassesses his role. Despite undoubted architectural links with his native Savoy, these are largely confined to architectural detail. The military planning and elements of symbolic display must rest in other hands. The twin-towered Edwardian gatehouses for example have no parallels in Savoy, but a long pedigree in Britain, not least in Wales. Coldstream suggest the hands may be those of the king and of Otto de Grandson, one of the many Savoyards in Edward's entourage. Despite this, Coldstream concludes that 'Over the project, . . . bestrode the figure of James of St George, master mason and organizer *par excellence*'. Rick Turner adds a study of Master James's versatile colleague Richard the Engineer, groundworks specialist, master carpenter, bridge builder and siege-engine maker, who did well enough in Edward's service to build himself a castellated town house which became one of the sights of his native Chester. Similarly, John Goodall, in a study of the baronial castles of the English conquest sees the architectural origins of the Edwardian castles not in a single 'great man' but in the collegiate structure of the London-based King's Works, which may have possessed an archive of plans and drawings available to its architects.

The well-preserved and well-documented domestic apartments, particularly at Conway, make it possible to study in close detail the royal apartments (Jeremy Ashbee) and the supply and preparation of food by the royal household (Peter Brears), whilst Keith Lilley considers the planning and layout of Edward's associated new towns. He questions the links with the *bastides* of Gascony, preferring English

models. He might have strengthened his case if he had included earlier planted towns in the Marches, from Chepstow onwards.

Papers on the building activities of Edward in Gascony (Marc Morris) and Scotland (Chris Tabraham) emphasise the uniqueness of his Welsh castles, for there is almost nothing comparable, despite the king's considerable involvement in both areas. The scale of Edward's work is again brought out by Graham Lott's study of the sourcing of building stone for what was, apart from anything else, a major engineering project.

Abigail Wheatley looks at Arnold Taylor's derivation of Caernarvon's distinctive towers and banded masonry from the Theodosian land walls of Constantinople. She relates them instead to legends of Imperial Rome and the influence of late Roman tile banded town walls. These legends, going back at least to the *Historia Britonum* in the early ninth century associate *Segontium* with Constantine the Great, Magnus Maximus and Helen of the Hosts, the last conflating Maximus's wife from the Life of Martin of Tours with St Helena, mother of Constantine. *The Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, 'Dream of Prince Maxen' from the Mabinogion was related by Brynley Roberts to the ambitions of an earlier ruler, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Wheatley seems to prefer a later date, but could have made more allowance for versions preceding the existing manuscripts.

Dylan Foster Evans traces the ambivalent attitudes to the Edwardian castles in medieval (and recent) Welsh poetry, whilst Adam Chapman reminds us that as many Welshmen fought for Edward as against him and that some Welsh rulers saw Llewelyn's ambitions as a bigger threat than Edward. Alun Ffred Jones, Minister for Heritage in the Welsh Assembly Government contributes a thoughtful review of the often ambiguous views of Edward's castles in contemporary Wales, whilst Robert Liddiard sums up the conference proceedings and suggests ways ahead for future research, particularly on the symbolic and social roles of castles. Richard Avent, in his final contribution to Welsh castle studies, describes the Victorian and Edwardian conservation work that saved Caernarvon castle from ruin and gave us the monument as we now see it. Lady Cambrians will be glad to learn that the entry gate is expressly designed to allow for their crinolines.

Caerphilly

JEREMY KNIGHT

THE CATHEDRALS, ABBEYS AND PRIORIES OF WALES. By Tim McCormick. 190 × 245 mm. viii + 184 pp. 238 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2010. ISBN 978 1 906663 29 2. Price £12.95.

This well-presented paperback deserves a cautious welcome. It is intended to provide a guide to the major monastic churches in Wales for the general intelligent reader who has a smattering of historical and architectural knowledge. By including the six cathedrals, of which Brecon was formerly a priory, the architectural content is considerably strengthened. Yet if one includes the secular cathedrals, why not include the five collegiate churches, such as Clynnog, Holyhead and Ruthin, some of which have their stalls and misericords intact?

A brief introduction clearly states the author's purpose in writing this book and his intention to concentrate upon those 31 sites where there are informative standing remains. He then provides five chapters on the general religious history of Wales, the characteristics of the monastic and mendicant orders, and the essential features of architectural styles. The final chapter in this group, 'The Dissolution and after', is entirely historical in its approach. The remaining six chapters provide the meat of the book, discussing the architectural styles, period by period from Celtic to Perpendicular, with the author using the most significant examples from the 31 chosen structures to illustrate his narrative. Throughout the

whole book there is a wealth of monochrome photographs, newly taken for this book and often selecting fresh viewpoints. By contrast there is no detailed plan, elevation drawing or reconstruction to illustrate any aspect of the text in greater depth. The only plan is a generalised one of the Benedictine monastic layout which imperfectly serves the differing needs of Cistercian and Dominican arrangements.

A commendable aspect of this book is the author's examination of building materials and structural considerations, which seeks to show why the churches were constructed to different designs within the changing architectural styles. The same concern is apparent in the later discussion of Tintern and the construction choices that were adopted as the building was being completed. Throughout this volume the technical architectural terms are explained in simple language. There is also a readiness to draw comparisons from major cathedrals and abbeys in England, though the existence of schools of sculpture and the movements of master masons are only occasionally suggested.

Generally speaking the review of architectural periods by using a few key buildings as examples of each style works well. It is less convincing for the Celtic style and virtually ignores the Victorian Gothic revival. The author's tendency to mention the Victorian material at Brecon, St David's and Llandaff in his earlier chapters without any cross-reference could lead to confusion. Similarly to discuss all the tombs at Abergavenny in the chapter on the Perpendicular does not provide a nuanced development. The purist would certainly find faults with this umbrella approach. The historian also would easily discover errors of fact and mistakes in personal names. The absence of any footnotes and a modest bibliography stresses the author's generalised approach. The haphazard nature of the index is another stumbling block to deeper scholarship. The main 31 buildings are nearly always correctly indexed as are all the illustrations. However, buildings cited for comparative purposes, whether in England or Wales, are seldom indexed. Some houses are indexed on separate occasions under their two different names, both Monkton and Pembroke, or Conway II and Maenan. Personal names are also erratic and in a few cases misleading.

The map in the Introduction shows the chosen 31 sites with standing remains. An appendix mentions 28 other sites with little or no remains. These include Talley, Bardsey and Haverfordwest, where presumably only an archaeologist would be interested in their ruins. Pill is omitted. There are five smaller monasteries where the community worshipped in the still surviving medieval parish church. The value of older illustrations is shown by the appearance on the back cover of Edward Dayes' watercolour of the west front of Llanthony, from about 1800. Grimm's illustration of Margam chapter house before the vault collapsed in 1799 could have been included with advantage, as could a view of John Wood's 'Italian Temple' built within the ruins of Llandaff. The attractive colour illustrations on the front cover certainly tempt the reader, though the hyperbole on the back cover makes rather excessive claims for the buildings discussed within. Hence a cautious approach is advisable.

Cambridge

LAWRENCE BUTLER

SAVING CHURCHES. THE FRIENDS OF FRIENDLESS CHURCHES: THE FIRST 50 YEARS. By Matthew Saunders. 235 × 280 mm. 128 pp. 166 illustrations. Frances Lincoln Ltd, London, 2010. ISBN 978 0 7112 3154 2. Price £16.99.

This short but immensely attractive book is a celebration of both the founder of the organisation, Ivor Bulmer Thomas, and of the churches that he and his friends have rescued from lonely and gradual dereliction. Added to this is a history of the organisation as it emerged from the post-war crises which left the Anglican Church with more buildings than it could use, many of them of the highest historical and architectural value. Anyone wanting to understand the regulatory structures in place to maintain the increasing number of redundant churches and the variation in these arrangements between the Church of

England and the Church in Wales should read pages 14–17 and learn why this private charitable organisation is still a crucial player in the survival of so many beautiful, historic and moving buildings.

The history of Ivor Bulmer Thomas himself and of his friends, who included Roy Jenkins MP and the Marquess of Anglesey who still remains President of the Friends after fifty years, and the history of the Church in Wales and its finances, which meant that there was no fund for the support of redundant churches in Wales until 1993, has ensured that more than half of the churches looked after by The Friends of Friendless Churches are in Wales. Cambrians, therefore, will find many much-loved buildings in the *Gazetteer of Churches* and many friends among the Trustees, architects, contractors and local guardians, all usefully listed, who have made their futures secure.

Ivor Bulmer Thomas, born in 1905 in Cwmbran, was a man of deep faith and enormous energy and determination. At Oxford he gained a First in Mathematics and Literae Humaniores and was an athletics Blue; he spoke six languages. He worked as a journalist on various papers including *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* and wrote several biographies. From 1942–48 he was Labour MP for Keighley and served in Atlee's government, but he later became a Tory and subsequently a Liberal Democrat. He had a passionate love for buildings, especially churches, and was a most effective campaigner for their care, both from within the formal organisation of the Anglican Church and alongside it with his own charity The Friends of Friendless Churches which he had hoped would be no longer needed when the Redundant Churches Fund was set up in 1968. Despite being Chairman of that Fund, he found that many worthy churches would be without support and the Friends were and are still in demand. When Bulmer Thomas died in 1993 Roger Evans, then MP for Monmouth, took over the Chairmanship and Matthew Saunders became Director, alongside his job as Secretary to the Ancient Monuments Society, a society of which Ivor Bulmer Thomas had been Secretary and Chairman and which he had seen as a sister society to the Friends.

The bulk of the book is taken up with a *Gazetteer* of the forty churches which have been vested in the society. Each entry is illustrated with some beautiful photographs, mainly in colour, and consists of an essay of about three to four pages, authoritative but chatty in style, followed by the date of vesting, and the names of the architect and contractor for the restoration work, useful if you are looking for someone to do good work for you! The essays give you the architectural and social history of the church, point out the fittings and features that you should not miss, and recount a few anecdotes about eccentric vicars and the like. It is like visiting with a well-informed friend.

Many of the churches have been in serious decay and the restorations have been extensive, but the Friends are also committed to on-going care of the building. They maintain a network of local volunteers who will hold the keys, open the church and provide flowers and cleaning and ward off vandals. In several instances they have encouraged the formation of a local society who will maintain and use the building and give it a new role within its community. In other cases they have found an entirely new use, with a tenant who is sympathetic to history and architecture, many of them artists and craftsmen. The society has over 2000 members but will need more as redundancies continue. Their website is at www.friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk

Bangor

FRANCES LYNCH

SHREWSBURY. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF AN ENGLISH BORDER TOWN. By Nigel Baker. 220 × 282 mm. xv + 272 pp. 164 illustrations. Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2010. ISBN 978 1 84217 315 2. Price £35.00.

This splendid hardback volume, about one of the major English borderland towns, owes its genesis to English Heritage's long-term 'urban archaeological strategies programme'. This seeks to promote the

conservation and management of both the buried and built archaeological resource of about thirty of the historically most important towns and cities in England. Three stages were envisaged in each of the towns or cities that have formed part of the programme: the initial stage was the creation of an 'urban archaeological database' to document, map and make more accessible the known archaeological resource of the settlement. This would provide the basis for the second stage, an 'urban archaeological assessment', synthesizing the known archaeology of the settlement. The final stage would culminate in an 'urban archaeological strategy', by which the local authority, who are partners in the enterprise, would set out policies for managing the settlement's archaeological resource.

Following the completion of the database work for Shrewsbury in the 1990s (now held as part of the Shropshire Historic Environment Record), the book focuses on the second of the stages. Part I characterises the archaeology of the town, summarizing the history of historical and archaeological investigation, its topography, the nature of buried archaeological deposits encountered in different part of the town, and what can be learnt from the study of its standing buildings, particularly of the many late medieval, timber-framed buildings for which it is renowned.

Part II provides a narrative of the history and archaeology of the town during different phases of its development. This begins with its obscure origins as a regional centre in the early post-Roman period, as a successor to the Roman city of Wroxeter, a little further downstream. By at least the early eleventh century it was known as *Scropesbyrig* (possibly 'scrubland fort') and following the Conquest had become an important administrative and military centre in the borderland. By the early fourteenth century the population rocketed to perhaps 5,000, its wealth based on trade and industry and the wool trade, not least from the extensive flocks grazing the uplands around the headwaters of the Severn, further upstream. The book goes on to consider the development of the town and its suburbs in the early modern period up to about 1700 and the late modern period up to about 1900.

Part III, entitled 'an assessment of the archaeology' draws together various themes and questions about the history of Shrewsbury which are of significance at local, regional and national levels, and looks at ways in which these might be addressed by future research. This is especially pertinent in the case of a town such as Shrewsbury which has a rich history but where the opportunities for excavation have been relatively few and far between. Some of the many unanswered questions which stand out include the intriguing question of the town's post-Roman origins, questions about urban growth and decline in the Middle Ages, and the domestic life of its inhabitants—the houses they lived in, the material culture available to them, and the nature of the crafts and industries that they undertook. The volume concludes with a tabulated gazetteer of sites and a series of period maps (also presented on an accompanying DVD), together with an extensive bibliography and index.

The volume is of interest and value to historians and archaeologists across the Welsh border in a number of different ways. Firstly, it provides a robust methodology of how to map history and assess the significance of the archaeological resource of historic urban centres. Secondly, because of its historical, social, economic and political ties with Wales, Shrewsbury can also in a sense be regarded at least in part as a Welsh town and an extension of Welsh history; its Welsh name—*Amwythig* ('little fort'), in use since at least the twelfth century and possibly a translation of *Scropesbyrig*—is still proudly proclaimed by road signs and station announcers across the border. The Welsh have left their mark, since as well as making a significant contribution to the cultural and economic history of the town there are no doubt, here and there, charred layers within the town and its suburbs marking the numerous attacks made by Welsh insurgents during the thirteenth century.

This is a thorough, well-illustrated and though-provoking volume, written by someone who has an intimate knowledge of Shrewsbury, and clearly borne of long experience not just of excavating its buried archaeology but of exploring its shuts, undercrofts and back gardens. As a professional archaeologist who

lives in part of Shrewsbury's historic suburbs I have found the volume of considerable interest, though I wonder whether the price tag will help to promote the broader readership that it so clearly deserves.

Shrewsbury

W. J. BRITNELL

THE WELSH COTTAGE. BUILDING TRADITIONS OF THE RURAL POOR. By Eurwyn Wiliam. 220 × 282 mm. 288 pp. 212 illustrations. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales Press, Aberystwyth, 2010. ISBN 978 1 871184 37 2. Price £29.95.

The study of Welsh buildings over the last half century has fallen into two quite separate approaches. The first, and what may now be considered the mainstream line of thought, is to treat buildings as archaeological artefacts. Chronology lies at the heart of this study, since the main purpose of this approach is to consider how building techniques and styles developed over time. The pioneers of this approach in Wales were J. T. Smith and Stanley Jones who during the 1960s recorded the houses of Breconshire in their holidays. This approach gained ground in the 1980s when the widespread use of dendrochronology allowed precise and reliable dates of construction to be ascertained and open the way to a systematic history of buildings. The fruits of this work was seen in Peter Smith's *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (1975) and, more recently, in Richard Suggett's *Houses and History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire, 1400–1800* (2005). These studies have established a firm understanding of the development of Welsh rural architecture.

The second line of study takes a rather different line and sets chronology aside in favour of tradition. The roots of this view ultimately lie in the folk movements of the late nineteenth century. It emphasises the importance of ethnography—the daily practices of ordinary people and the traditions of which they were part. This volume firmly belongs to that approach, and it is no coincidence that the author worked at St Fagans Museum, formerly the Welsh Folk Museum. This study emphasizes not so much the building as an artefact, but the house as the product of traditional methods of construction and as a place of occupation. Human life and experience play a prominent role and stress is given to the continuity of craft practices. The book combines late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century photographs of building work with more recent illustrations of craftsmen carrying out similar work.

The strength of this approach, and of this book, is that it captures the experience of the process of construction and living in the buildings without any sentimentality. We can have no doubt that the life of the inhabitants of these buildings was hard and the accommodation in a cottage was very basic. However, it is possible to exaggerate the poverty of Wales, as travellers were inclined to do. Some ventured into the interior of Wales as they might a distant country. An Englishman in 1813 described the inhabitants of upland Glamorgan as 'almost naked, excessively nasty, their long straight hair hanging around their tawny faces'. Creating a balanced view of the past is the historian's equivalent of walking on a tightrope and there was, of course, considerable variation of wealth even amongst cottage dwellers. The old woman photographed in 1882 outside her decaying building in Cardiganshire, and shown on the front cover, must have belonged amongst the poorest.

This is not a work of social history, but a study of the traditions of housing of the poor. The problem lies with the term 'traditions'. It implies that housing changed very little in the 150 years covered by this volume. Yet that is clearly not the case in some areas of Wales, as this volume makes clear. Industrialisation and the impact of commercial markets had considerable impact. There is a tendency throughout the volume to emphasise continuity over change. Dating is often set to one side, partly because it is so very difficult to determine the dates of construction. One excavated building is described

as broadly medieval in date, but remained in occupation until at least the late eighteenth century. Another is ‘thought to be post-medieval in date’. These are the rare buildings which have been the subject of archaeological study; we know even less about the dates of other standing examples. Unchanging continuity is an illusion, as research in other parts of the British Isles has demonstrated. People were for ever modifying houses, creating extensions or removing ends. Techniques of construction also rarely remained the same for decades on end. New methods of building arose with the increasing or decreasing cost and availability of materials, and with changing ideas. We may suspect that what are identified here as traditions may turn out to be practices in transition.

This volume is an outstanding example of the study of the ethnography of buildings. It stands comparison with any work from continental Europe where this approach is more common. There is here a huge wealth of written and pictorial information which has been gathered together. It is extensively illustrated, often in colour, making it a most handsome volume. In the long term, the importance of the book may well be that it has provided one approach to the study of buildings. The other type of study identified above still has to make its contribution to cottages. Only when the two are put together will we have a full understanding of the character of these buildings.

Belfast

MARK GARDINER

THE WYE TOUR AND ITS ARTISTS. By Julian Mitchell. 205 × 260 mm. viii + 168 pp. 112 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2010. ISBN 978 1 906663 32 2. Price £12.95.

In 2010 Chepstow Museum mounted a memorable exhibition *The Wye Tour and Its Artists*, curated by Julian Mitchell and Anne Rainsbury. This book, of the same title, includes colour reproductions of the hundred or so early paintings of Wye scenery included in the exhibition, by Turner, Varley, Rowlandson and Cotman, as well as by local topographical artists like Joshua Gosselin and Joshua Cristall. These show the development of watercolour from early ‘tinted drawings’ to later examples influenced by oil painting techniques, as well as being an invaluable record of places and buildings often much changed. There is also a magisterial study by Mitchell of the tour and its history. At a time when roads in Monmouthshire were notoriously bad, or non-existent, the full two-day tour was accomplished by river boat from Ross on Wye to Chepstow, with an overnight stop at Monmouth. The craft were furnished with dining tables, awnings against the sun (or rain!), carpets and ample food and drink, though travellers sometimes complained of the ubiquitous Wye salmon. The tour had been initiated around 1740 by a wealthy rector of Ross-on-Wye and future bishop of Durham as a way of entertaining his house guests. Early ‘tourists’ (a word with a more socially exclusive meaning than today) were equipped with Claude glasses for correctly identifying ‘picturesque’ views and copies of the schoolmaster William Gilpin’s prescriptions in his *Observations on the River Wye . . . Relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1783). However, changing tastes soon outgrew dependence on the paintings of Claude and Poussin.

Mitchell provides a useful bibliographical guide to the many printed tours and guidebooks which are still such a rich quarry for the historian, including those of the prolific Monmouth printer and author Charles Heath. Even Nelson and Lady Hamilton thought it advisable to equip themselves with his guidebooks when visiting the area. We are also given a witty, erudite and entertaining tour along the Wye, in the company of its early tourists, from Ross-on-Wye to Tintern Abbey, virtually inaccessible by wheeled transport until the building of the present road in 1821, but where the early iron industry provided suitably picturesque images, to Piercefield, with the paths, grottos and viewpoints created by the unfortunate Valentine Morris and finally to Chepstow, a journey made the more enjoyable by the

parallel series of illustrations of local scenes, with an artistic and biographical commentary in the extended footnotes.

The tourists, like their modern counterparts visiting the third world, variously saw the locals as picturesque, the ‘deserving’ (or otherwise) poor, or as objects of pity and charity (the height of the tours coincided with a period of poor harvests and high unemployment). Some blamed the ‘importunate beggars’ encountered by many visitors at Tintern on the indiscriminate charity once doled out by the monks, and others complained of ‘the coarseness of language too frequently heard from the navigators of public rivers’—to swear like a navvy became proverbial. Wordsworth and his sister had been put off visiting the abbey in 1798 by the ‘importunate beggars’ and his famous poem, sometimes referred to as ‘Tintern Abbey’ is actually titled ‘Lines composed *a few miles above* Tintern Abbey’. From 1822, steam packets brought less exclusive visitors, ‘trippers rather than tourists’, like those complained of by Wordsworth in his *Guide to the Lakes* to Tintern, now opened up by the new road (extended in 1827 to Monmouth). In 1850 the railway reached Chepstow and in 1876 the Wye Valley Railway opened.

The usual high production standards of Logaston Press make this an attractive and very useful book. Chepstow Museum and its curator, Anne Rainsbury should be warmly congratulated on the exhibition on which this book is based. Sadly, falls in river levels resulting from climatic and other changes have ended both the river traffic and the ubiquity of the Wye salmon.

Caerphilly

JEREMY KNIGHT

Other Books Received

THOMAS MATTHEWS’S WELSH RECORDS IN PARIS. A STUDY IN SELECTED WELSH MEDIEVAL RECORDS. By Dylan Rees and J. Gwynfor Jones. 164 × 240 mm. xxxix + 143 pp. 8 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2010. ISBN 978 0 7083 2301 4. Price £48.00.

Thomas Matthews died at the age of 42 in 1916. During his short but full life as a teacher, bard of the *Gorsedd* and historian, he catalogued medieval manuscript sources relating to Wales that were held in the archives of Paris and Rome, the former being published in 1910 as *Welsh Records in Paris*. The contents of the original volume are republished here, with transcripts and translations of a series of thirteenth-century papal bulls, the document recording the alliance between Llywelyn ap Iorwerth with the king of France and a miscellaneous group of papers relating to Owain Glyndŵr. The authors also provide an overview of Matthews’ life and reassess his role as a medieval historian, with the aim of restoring his reputation which declined after his death.

TWENTY-ONE WELSH PRINCES (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst, 2010). By Roger Turvey. 137 × 215 mm. 123 pp. 41 illustrations. ISBN 978 1 84527 269 2. Price £5.95.

With a sub-title of ‘the rulers and ruling families of medieval Wales’ the short essays of between 700 and 2000 words on eighteen princes and three wives and daughters range from Rhodri Mawr in the ninth century to Owain Glyndŵr in the fifteenth. They are supplemented by colour photographs of varying relevance from contemporary castles through to modern memorials.